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***USAID SUCCESS STORIES FROM SAN SALVADOR***

Presented by

**UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR**

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AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA A. I. D. MISSION  
TO EL SALVADOR  
C/O AMERICAN EMBASSY.  
SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR, C. A.

**MESSAGE FROM THE MISSION DIRECTOR**

There is no doubt that El Salvador is a different place today than it was during the very difficult civil war years. But one thing that has not changed is the spirit and vitality of the Salvadoran people.

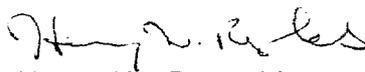
A country once bound by the ravages of war now bravely faces the undaunting prospect of rebuilding. Hundreds of small communities are as challenged in this task as is the nation itself. At every level, infrastructures must be reestablished, systems redesigned, and new ways of forging ahead created.

We are very proud of the role that USAID has played in helping the country emerge through this transitional period. The stories you are about to read in this booklet tell of some of our successes at the grass roots and most human levels. They tell the plight of some very special and very ordinary people whose lives were changed for the better as a direct result of an AID project.

We invite you to peruse this booklet to read for yourself how effectively well-suited these grass roots projects are for this enterprising and spirited people and to see the tremendous success USAID El Salvador has had toward achieving its strategic objectives. These successes exemplify that our transfer of human and financial capital has made El Salvador a better place.

Although AID missions around the world could report many moving "success stories" as we have here, few are so fortunate as to work in a country where the people themselves are clearly the country's greatest asset.

We are sure you will feel as convinced as we that the Salvadoran people have truly earned their reputation as the "shining star of Central America."

  
Henry W. Reynolds  
Director, a.i.

*USAID Success Stories From San Salvador*

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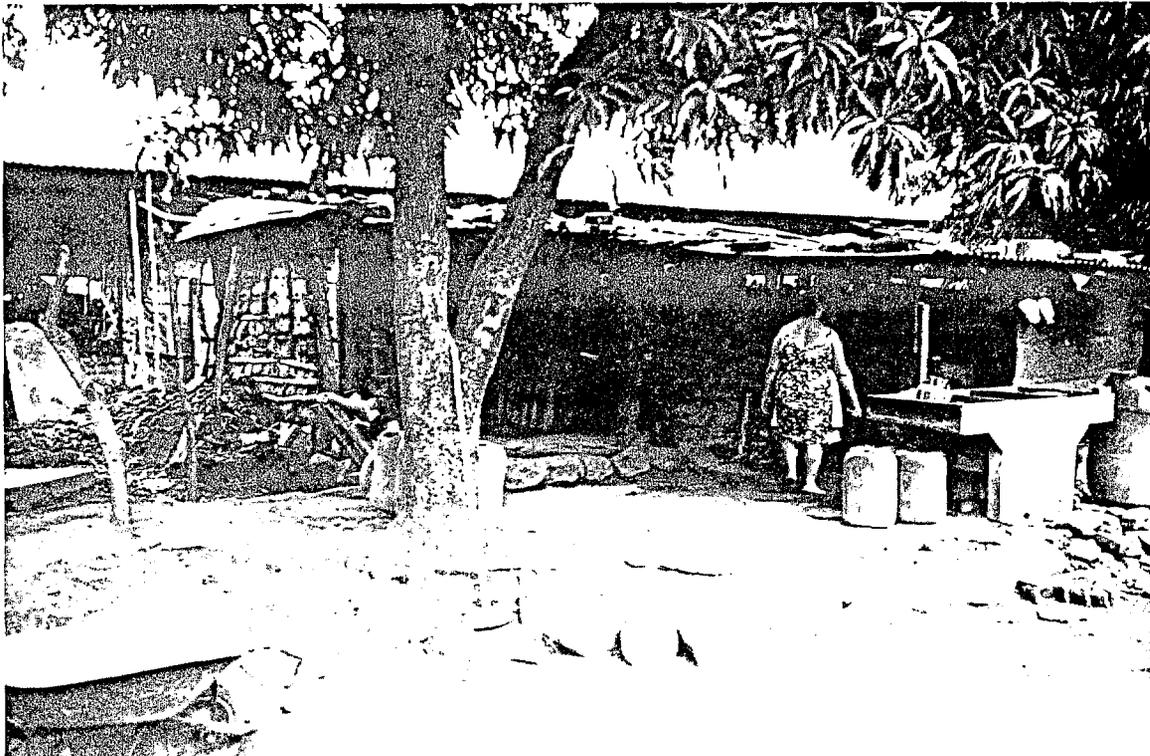
## A COOPERATIVE EFFORT

The flower garden stands out in the rural community of San Francisco Suchitoto in El Salvador. María García de Salinas filled the plot in front of her new concrete house with wild flowers. The colors are as in a flower show--scarlet, gold, salmon, eggshell. Yet only three months ago, María lived with her husband Victor and their six children in a three-wall mud shack with very little color and little room for flowers.

Victor Salinas is the president and manager of the San Francisco Suchitoto Cooperative. During the twelve-year civil war in El Salvador, the sugar cane cooperative suffered greatly. Because San Francisco was a highly conflictive area, Victor and the other members feared going to work. As one man explained, "When we left the house, we didn't know whether we would return." The cooperative suffered damage to its land and machinery. The situation was so bad that no member earned a liveable income despite working whenever the war permitted. Their families suffered as well. Restricted by the dangers of the war and the lack of adequate transportation, children couldn't attend school. Mothers only cooked when there was food. Medical care was nonexistent.

The cooperative hit rock bottom in 1991. Overextended on its bank credit while retaining a foreman to administer its affairs, it faced extremely high administrative and machine repair costs. Through a newspaper ad, the cooperative learned of Technoserve, a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded private voluntary organization (PVO). Technoserve assists cooperatives in business and technical training, helping them become fully self-managed, productive enterprises.

The members of the San Francisco Cooperative visited Las Lajas, a cooperative whose members had been trained by Technoserve technicians. Impressed by the organization and productivity of Las Lajas, the members of San Francisco requested assistance from Technoserve and the PVO agreed to help the cooperative for three years. A team of four technicians visited San Francisco several times a week and trained the members in business administration, cost-cutting, organization, and planning. The managers that the cooperative had employed to oversee the business aspect of production were let go, and members of the cooperative matured to fill those positions.



Victor and María moved their six children out of this shack three months ago.

Since Technoserve's training, San Francisco has cut production costs and increased net profits. They have invested profits in improved machinery and farming supplies, and further increased their levels of production.

Revenues generated in the past two years were re-invested in the community. Working with a social service advisor from Technoserve, the members of the cooperative built sixteen concrete homes for thirty-two families. Plus, they established a health clinic that employs three doctors. The next project is a school to alleviate crowding in Aguilares, a nearby town.

Wearing his cowboy hat, Victor Salinas sits comfortably behind his desk. Charts and diagrams of the hierarchy and division of labor in the cooperative decorate the walls of the president's office. Victor explains that each member of the cooperative receives a salary according to his or her position and seniority. At the end of each year, members receive dividends based on the same. But by no means are the ranks closed; Victor grins as he explains he was elected by the membership and can be voted out at any time. It keeps him straight, he figures.

Victor and María received housing from the cooperative and the couple shows off their new home with an air of satisfaction. María smooths her daughter Dina's hair as she explains that after twelve years of living in a shack and walking over a mile for water, she has a well in the backyard and a room to store food. Her family is no longer hungry. Tied to the front post is a calf, one of several María and her younger children, Norma and Rafael, care for happily. Chickens run free in the backyard. Watching them, Victor says, "We never had animals before." The availability of nutritious foods and preventative health care have kept the Salinas family healthy for the past several months. Two years ago, the whole family would often fall ill, with the only medical care the hospital in Chalatenango -- about 40 kilometers away.

In the flower garden, Victor and María pose for a picture with their heads held high. They say that it is thanks to the work of Technoserve and USAID that they live with dignity.



María now has time to plant flowers in front of her new home.

## The "Great Prize"

High in the mountains of El Salvador, on the outskirts of the small town of San Agustín, lies the La Providencia Cooperative. The cooperative grows the first brand of organic coffee produced in El Salvador, known as Pipil.

During the twelve-year civil war in El Salvador, the members of La Providencia had very little money. Spending all they had on the basic necessities of life, they were forced to leave the coffee crop without chemical fertilizers or insecticides. The neglect of the crop yielded what they call their "great prize." Because the coffee had grown free of chemicals. La Providencia was in a position to corner the emerging international market for organic coffee. The discovery was made when the Cooperative League of the U.S.A. (CLUSA), a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded non-governmental organization (NGO), initially contacted the cooperative.

Chungo Iglesias, president of the cooperative, has worked the hills of La Providencia for ten years. A small man with bright blue eyes,

Chungo distrusts organizations. Before CLUSA, NGOs passed through offering to help repair the damage done by the civil war. They took information away with them, but never returned. CLUSA was different. After an initial evaluation, CLUSA sent a team of technicians to train the coop members in administrative and technical skills. Now, almost three years later, the training continues.

Chungo walks through the coffee bushes, explaining that CLUSA showed the members how to conserve water and soil by digging trenches at the base of each bush. Thirty-nine composters line the road on the way up the mountain, providing a natural fertilizer for the coffee. Not only does this knowledge help to preserve the environment, but it also increases Chungo's harvest. He applies his new learning to his own small plot of land allocated by the cooperative. CLUSA also increased Pipil's marketability by helping it become certified by the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA), an internationally recognized organic crop certification program.



Chungo Iglesias shows off mature coffee bushes recuperated through pruning.

CLUSA helped La Providencia improve their community as well as their business. When CLUSA put the cooperative in contact with the Ministry of Public Works to begin construction of the road to San Agustín, it showed the members how to take the first steps toward helping themselves. CLUSA again assisted the cooperative by facilitating their access to USAID's program for rural electrification. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), funded by USAID, completed the installation of power in March of 1994.

Before the road to San Agustín existed, when any of Chungo's three young sons became ill, home became the hospital. The trip down the mountain was difficult, and made access to medical care virtually impossible. All that has changed. Because the trip takes minutes now, Chungo's wife can buy fresh milk in San Agustín for her two-year-old twins, Jose and Luis. When asked about how he likes electric power, Chungo smiles sheepishly. It seems the family is still getting used to its electric lighting.

Chungo's searches the ground at his feet as he talks about the hardships the cooperative faced during the war. Often, the guerrillas would not let the members of the cooperative collect the harvest, and the storage building was bombed more times than he'd care to count. The bank wouldn't extend their loan to the cooperative, Chungo believes, because La Providencia was in the eye of the guerrilla storm.

Even now, La Providencia has problems. The members lack potable water, and although CLUSA technical assistance has helped them pay off most of their debts, there are still bills to pay. Because of their poor credit history, the bank is reluctant to lend the members the full amount they feel is needed to advance the cooperative. Chungo and the other members are still poor, but they are now working year-round. During the war, Chungo says, he was lucky if he worked more than one month a year.



Chungo and his associates apply organic methods to their family fields.

Chungo is proud to work with CLUSA. Although he has not seen immediate, magical changes in his life, CLUSA has built the foundation for improvement; Chungo knows he will gain in time.

In the United States, the advancement of La Providencia has benefitted the companies marketing Pipil coffee. Elan International Organic Coffees is one such company. It began importing Pipil Coffee two years ago, and has seen a marked increase in market strength each year. Mark Perkins of Elan expects Pipil coffee to begin a rapid climb to a premiere organic coffee within the next year. Pipil, still a small part of Elan's business, has

overcome El Salvador's anonymity as an organic coffee producer, a prejudice some countries never surmount, according to Perkins.

The Agency for International Development and CLUSA are determining factors in the ultimate success of the La Providencia Cooperative. Without the help of USAID, the life of Chungo and his partners would not be very different from the war years, something no one in La Providencia recalls fondly. Now, with administrative and field training, access to surrounding communities, power, and a receptive export market, La Providencia is reaping the benefits of its "great prize."

## DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

The twelve-year civil war that raged in the mountains and cities of El Salvador had devastating consequences. After the signing of the peace accords in 1991, the arduous task of rebuilding the nation began. Municipalities in Action (MEA), a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program active during the long conflict, is a strong force in the national reconstruction effort. MEA focusses on disseminating power to the community level and encourages communities to assume responsibility for local government. The instrument for decision-making and approving development projects in the communities is the "cabildo abierto," or open town meeting.

Every morning Rosa María Galvez starts a fire under a blackened cauldron, boiling corn to make tortillas. Rosa lives in *Comunida Universal*, part of the municipality of Antigua Cuscatlán. Sixty-year-old Rosa attends every town meeting in Antigua Cuscatlán. While she sometimes speaks up individually (as any

member of the community can), her community has elected a spokesperson for the almost three hundred residents. The community prepares for each meeting, making a list for the spokesperson of their particular needs. This has been an effective means of improvement; in the past three years *Comunida Universal* has received potable household water, a sewage system, and a cement road.

Rosa says she feels lucky to have the water provided through the "cabildo." She lives with her two children and two of her grandchildren, and used to walk over a kilometer for their water every morning. She is happy those days are over, especially, she says, now that she is feeling her age. The *Comunida Universal* now needs housing repairs and, Rosa explains, the residents have decided it will be their first request at the next town meeting. "Thanks be to God that we are able to approach the mayor and be heard," Rosa says.



Running water in her house means Rosa (left) does not have to carry it anymore.

The residents of Antiguo Cuscatlán gather four times a year to express their concerns to the mayor and the town council. Citizens criticize, voice opinions, and share ideas about the needs of the community. The Mayor Milagro Navas and her council meet after the meeting to prioritize community needs. The prioritized list is presented at the next town meeting. After the presentation, the mayor and her council meet with the National Reconstruction Secretariat, USAID's point of participation in the development process. The Secretariat supports reconstruction efforts with USAID funding, helps the mayor develop action plans for the projects that it funds, and provides technical assistance, if necessary. It is not the Secretariat's role to approve the project; the citizens of Antiguo Cuscatlán approve each one at the town meetings.

One of the recent projects completed is a town library. The school in the community had no books, and the only library available to the residents was that of a nearby university. Because the university books were very advanced, and one had to pay to enter the facility, the residents of Antiguo Cuscatlán voiced the need for a primary level public library. The town was able to collect several hundred children's books by working with the Ministry of Education. In September 1993, the library opened. The librarian, María Ramones, asked the teachers at the local school to allow the students to visit the library for half an hour each week. The teachers agreed, and six classes a day troop through the small building.



The library is so well received, it is adding another floor and starting adult literacy classes.

Diana Portillo, Saul Adoniel, and Marcela González are three of the students in those classes. All ten years old, they arrive and sign in noisily. After pulling several books from the

shelves, they sit down at one of the many tables and begin to thumb through their selections. Marcela likes fairy tales, and today she reads Cinderella. A quiet girl with short

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brown hair, she comes after school with her older sister. Saul bursts with energy. He loves comic books, and mysteries are okay. Usually he plays soccer after school, so he comes to the library only once a week. His mother would like him to come more often. Diana comes to the library almost every day, often bringing her whole family. She loves to read, and likes studying history.

Through MEA, USAID has provided the funding and technical assistance necessary to build the

library and improve surrounding neighborhoods. The tangible effects of MEA are impressive, but enduring democratic participation is the final outcome of the project. MEA has empowered the community of Antiguo Cuscatlán. Here and in municipalities throughout El Salvador, USAID has helped the citizens help themselves by enabling them to participate in local government decision-making through the open town meeting.



The new library receives six classes daily.

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## HOUSE CALLS

Pneumonia, diarrhea, and malnutrition kill thousands of young children in El Salvador every year. The twelve-year-civil war that devastated the nation hindered the access of many towns to basic medical services. Rural to urban migration during the same time period increased the demand for urban doctors. These events left most of the rural areas in El Salvador without basic health care services. Families that could not afford bus fare to see a city doctor had to watch their sick children die for lack of a local doctor.

Responding to this need for local services, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) implemented the Maternal Health and Child Survival project (PROSAMI) in 1990. The project's goal was to expand community based maternal health and child survival services. Thirty-six indigenous, grass roots non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work under PROSAMI, training health care promoters to prevent and detect disease, and to diagnose, treat, and refer patients in rural communities.



Martita Veronica is almost two years old now.

Mabel Salazar leaves her house every morning at eight for her rounds. Her work day, however, began hours before; when she is not on rounds she is running a clinic out of her home. Mabel is a PROSAMI health promoter working under the NGO ASALDI in the town of San Isidro. She finished her three-month training course with PROSAMI in December 1991, and now works as a salaried promoter, visiting houses, giving preventive care and mini-lectures, and treating illnesses. Mabel moved to San Isidro at the age of eight, so the members of the community know her well. Even so, she had trouble gaining their trust in her position; many people thought the NGO she represented had political affiliations. Now three years later, the community relies on her enormously, coming to her for advice at all hours, every day.

Marta Julia Martínez, a resident of San Isidro, knocked on Mabel's door almost a year ago. Her granddaughter, eleven-month-old Martita Veronica, had severe diarrhea, and had been tired and cranky all day. Mabel, using the diagnostic cards provided through her PROSAMI training, concluded that the little girl



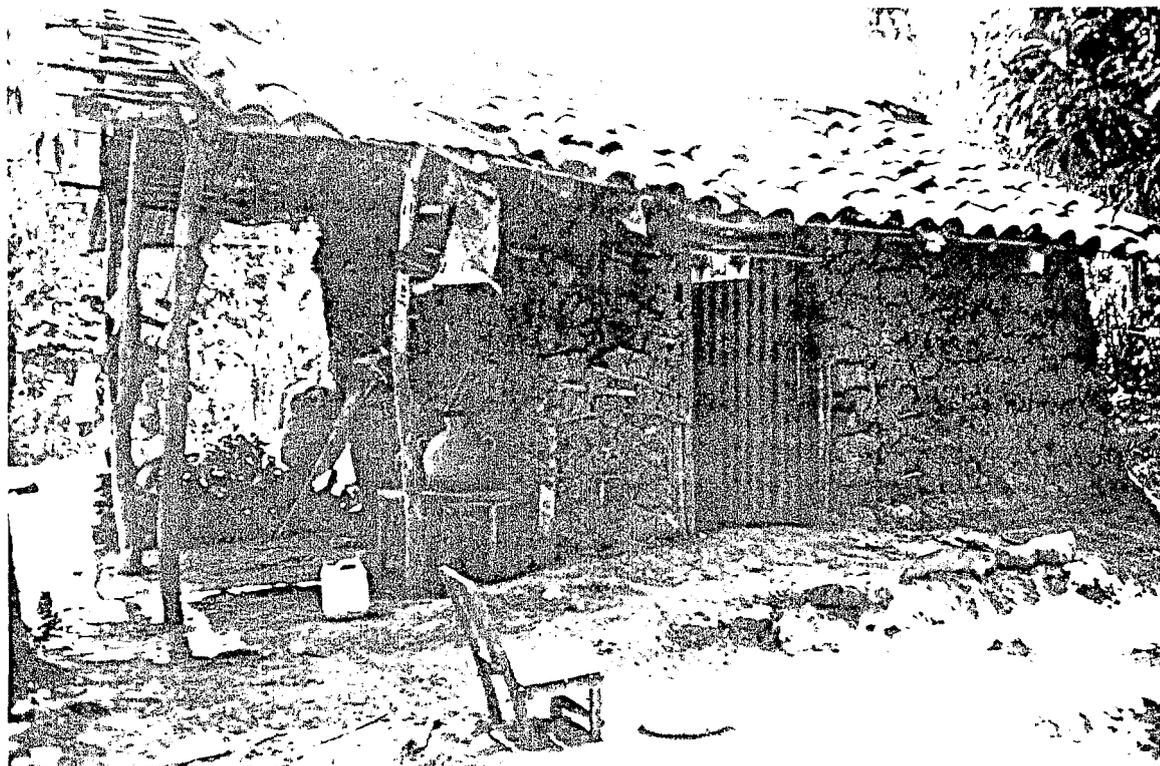
Mabel refers a patient to the clinic in town.

did not have cholera as she initially suspected. She gave Martita rehydration salts and visited the home the following day. By then Martita was vomiting, and could no longer keep down the rehydration serum. Mabel told the family Martita would have to go to the children's hospital in San Salvador, almost two hours away. As the family had no money for medical care, Mabel arranged for the trip to be funded by her volunteer health committee's emergency fund. At the hospital Martita received intravenous fluids, and made a full recovery. According to the doctors at Bloom Hospital, she would not have survived without Mabel's immediate attention and administration of the rehydration salts. Martita is almost two now. She plays in her yard like any little girl, happy to be outside on a warm day. She smiles shyly as her picture is taken, not sure why all the fuss is being made.

Martita's story, while compelling, is not unusual in the town of San Isidro. Mabel passes houses on her daily rounds, pointing out where she has attended a birth, helped after a miscarriage, saved a little boy from pneumonia, or weighed a premature baby.

The small shack is the last stop on Mabel's rounds. Dora Lisia López shares the crumbling adobe structure with her five children. In the poor town of San Isidro, this family is one of the poorest. Dora Lisia's family is an example of the nearly 30% of Salvadoran households headed by an unaccompanied female. These families are the most disadvantaged group in the country; with no adult male in the house, Dora Lisia and her children raise no crops and have little steady income. To earn money for food and the \$1.60 a month needed to send her two eldest children to school, Dora Lisia irons and washes clothes. Her thirteen-year-old daughter works for food at a cheese shop. Her eight-year-old son sells firewood. Mabel says that the family is barely surviving; she gives them food donations whenever possible.

Dora Lisia's middle child, five-year-old Blanca Ana, is the only child Dora Lisia did not breast feed. Although she had learned the benefits of breast feeding through Mabel's health lectures, Dora Lisia was sick after Blanca's birth, and could not do what she had been taught. Mabel thinks that is the reason fair haired Blanca is often ill with respiratory infections. The last



Dora Lisia shares this adobe shack with her five children.

one was nearly fatal. When Dora Lisia brought her to Mabel she was in the advanced stages of pneumonia; she had a respiratory rate of 55 breaths per minute and a temperature of 103F. Mabel wanted to refer her to a hospital, but Dora Lisia said she couldn't leave her four other children. She would put her trust in God and Mabel to cure her child. Mabel administered triple sulfa, and monitored the little girl over the next 24 hours. In the evening of the following day, Blanca was on the road to recovery.

Mabel is not a doctor, but is trained to diagnose and treat the most common deadly illnesses. The nearly 500 PROSAMI health promoters in an estimated 1,200 Salvadoran communities received the same training and are making the same marked difference; over 440,000 Salvadoran people benefit from the work of PROSAMI and USAID. For many young Salvadoran children to benefit from the PROSAMI project is to wake up to a day they otherwise might not have seen.

## FROM ODD JOB TO TOP JOB

Rogelio Castaneda is one Salvadoran who feels very lucky to have received training from Technoserve.

Rogelio arrived at the San Francisco farm when he was ten years old. His mother, widowed shortly after he was born, sold mangoes to farmers. Too poor to feed her large family, she realized that farmhands received meals at the farms where they worked. She was determined to find odd jobs on a farm for her eight children so that they could eat three meals a day.

Now the father of six and grandfather of two, Rogelio moved up from odd jobs to field manager on that very farm where he started out and which has become the San Francisco Suchitoto Cooperative. He held that position through the formation of the cooperative and the difficult years that followed.

The twelve-year civil war took its toll on the cooperative. It suffered, as fewer and fewer people made it to work. The machinery and administration went from bad to worse. According to Rogelio, Technoserve's training and assistance came in the nick of time.

Technoserve technicians trained Rogelio in production methods and the operations of a cooperative. As the cooperative progressed, he learned cost-cutting and savings methods as well.

Rogelio wisely applied both his earnings and knowledge from Technoserve to the improvement of his family's situation. By saving his personal resources, he was able to send five of his children to a university in San Salvador. Using his dividend from the cooperative, Rogelio and his youngest son started a small cattle business.

Rogelio's wife, Elsa, became the business's legal representative for financial credit, something the family decided together. Rogelio had watched women become equal members of the cooperative, and perhaps it influenced him to make Elsa a "more equal" partner in the family's business affairs.

Rogelio feels the cooperative is "more competitive in the business market now." He feels proud and honored to have gained from Technoserve's assistance.



Don Rogelio and his wife Elsa share family business responsibilities.

## A NEW DIGNITY

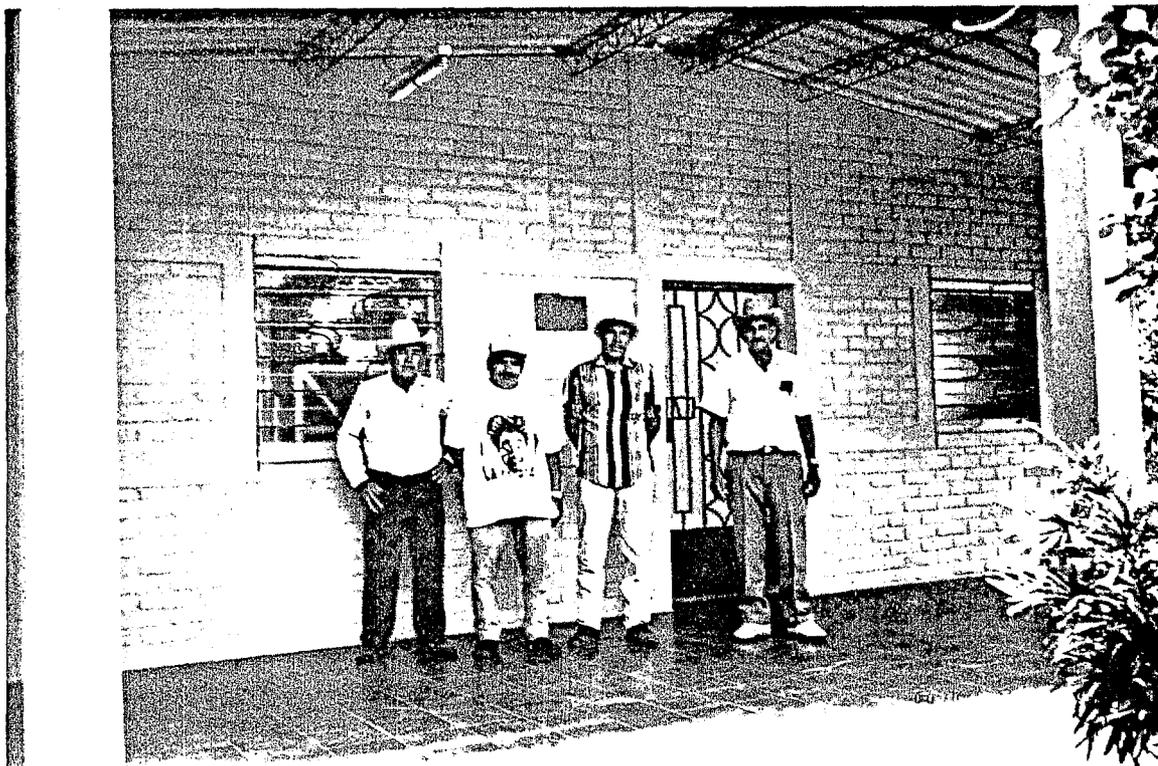
Francisco Guillén was orphaned at the age of eight. Raised by his grandparents, he worked every summer as a tractor driver to finance his high school education. Sometimes he was so exhausted after his long shift, he slept on the ground, hungry and cold. When he finished school, he found work as an agricultural warehouse clerk for the farm that is now the San Francisco Suchitoto Cooperative. When the cooperative formally organized in 1980, Guillén became a member.

Francisco has served the cooperative in many different ways. He became the general clerk shortly after becoming a partner, and two years later moved to the Management Council, and then the Supervisory Board. He now serves as president of the Education Committee, and heads the adult literacy program.

Francisco and his wife, Carmen, live in the nearby town of Aguilares. Since Technoserve began assisting the San Francisco cooperative, they have added on to their house. Francisco and his family on to now have access to transportation, something they needed badly because they do not live in San Francisco.

"The cooperative has been like a mother to us," says Francisco. "Thanks to the work of Technoserve, we can live with dignity."

And thanks to the work of Technoserve, Francisco compliments his new dignity with a new vision as well. He now looks with hope to the future.



Francisco, second from left, poses with associates from the cooperative in front of the new health clinic.

### A "No-Frills" Mechanic

The Business Foundation for Educational Development (FEPADE), a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Salvadoran non-governmental organization, (NGO) trains over 19,000 Salvadorans each year. Approximately 40% of those trained under FEPADE's various programs are women. FEPADE hopes to improve the economic situation of women not only by reaching more of them, but by training them in more technical or higher paying professions.

FEPADE's initial efforts to do so met with an unanticipated problem -- most women opt for occupations traditionally identified with their sex. In fact, FEPADE concluded that male resistance to women in non-traditional roles is matched by women's preconceptions of gender-appropriate professions. Only when FEPADE began working with both sides of the

cultural equation did it begin to successfully place women in traditionally male occupations.

Jackie Flores graduated from FEPADE in 1991 as the first female auto mechanic in El Salvador. A shy young woman, Jackie graduated from high school and had hoped to study psychology or journalism at the university. Given the unstable economy, however, professional positions in El Salvador were few and far between. Jackie decided to enroll in a course at FEPADE after seeing an announcement in the paper. She began the automechanics course because she demonstrated an ability for that type of work in FEPADE's aptitude screening. Jackie says her father helped her decide as well. One suspects that he did a little more than help her decide; both he and her two older brothers are mechanics.



Jackie Flores checks the engine of a new car.

FEPADE's training is an equal mix of classroom and field experience. When Jackie first began her field experience training at the General Automotriz garage, the male mechanics couldn't believe she was qualified. She soon proved herself however; the manager of the garage was so pleased with her work he financed the second half of her year's training provided that she work at the General Automotriz upon her graduation. Jackie has worked in the rapid service division for three years, specializing in tune-ups and oil changes.

Jackie earns 1,700 colones a month, about \$210. She lives at home, gives her family the money, and is helping send her younger brother to college. She is also saving to buy a car, probably a pick-up. This information is extracted slowly; Jackie, uncomfortable in formal situations, doesn't like talking about herself. One gets the feeling this earnest woman has things she finds more important.

Jackie says she hasn't had a lot of trouble being a female in an all male facility. The men used to tease her, but she long ago became "un compañero más," one of the boys. Customers have not displayed much of a reaction either to this "no-frills" mechanic. They generally don't know who works on their car, but those who find out that it was a woman don't mind, and some customers even request her. Jackie explains that car repair is no longer physical labor; much of it is now delicate computer repair work, something she believes a woman's hands are more suited to than a man's. She doesn't miss female companionship because she is friendly with the women receptionists in the garage. Jackie says she has changed personally through her work in a male environment. She is "more understanding of all people now."

Jackie's situation as an accepted female in a traditionally male field is, however, an unusual one throughout most of the world, and even more so in El Salvador. The El Salvador Civil Code establishes the rights of women to basic human rights. In addition to these rights, Salvadoran women have the right to vote, own land, and establish credit. Jobs must be conserved after paid maternity leave, and companies must establish daycare for their employees. Women have the right to divorce, and the right to alimony subsequent to divorce. It would thus appear that the women of El Salvador have full and equal rights under the law, but, sadly, that is anything but true.

The women of El Salvador suffer. They receive very little formal education. Beginning their families at an early age, some Salvadoran women have as many as twelve children, extending their childbearing years far beyond any North American or European norm. Fewer than one-third of the women in El Salvador are in legal marriages; over one-quarter are the heads of their single parent homes. Women on average work four more hours daily than men in El Salvador, but often receive less than minimum wage for their labor. Guessing a woman's age in El Salvador is close to impossible; the years of struggle make young women old far before their time.

USAID and FEPADE strive to improve the situation of women in El Salvador by making them, like Jackie Flores, "direct and equal recipients of technical assistance."